

PREPARING YOUNG MINDS TO LEARN



Jessica Kiser

For young children braving school for the first time, those first days away from home can be a scary experience.

Jessica Kiser, who teaches a combined Head Start and pre-school classroom at Allen Elementary School in Floyd County, recognizes this and looks for ways to put her pupils at ease.

Jessica, honored in 2019 as one of KET's Education All Stars for using technology in innovative ways in the classroom, has had a lot of success with her approach — and she says KET's educational resources have played a pivotal role.

FIRST STEP: ADDRESS THE EMOTIONS

Students face a confusing set of new feelings and emotions. So from the outset, Jessica makes it a point to help them understand what they're going through.

One resource that's helped her, she says, is the Daniel Tiger app from PBS KIDS, which walks children through new scenarios, such as a trip to the dentist or doctor's office, and addresses the emotions that attend those experiences.

"It helps children understand what they can do when they're feeling that way," Jessica says. "Once the children are comfortable with their emotions, that helps establish a foundation that we can build on the rest of the year."



FIND THE FUN

When Jessica tackles a new concept, such as counting, she teaches the lesson through hands-on activities that offer opportunities for real fun. If they're learning numbers, for instance, Jessica sets up a makeshift grocery store with a cash register, and her pupils will act as adults would, counting items and exchanging payment.

"They already know how to play," Jessica says. "We just add learning to the mix."

It's a concept Jessica's honed in recent years, thanks in part to KET's early childhood education workshops, where teachers explore ways to incorporate playful activities into their daily lessons.

LET TECHNOLOGY SPARK IMAGINATIONS

Two years ago, Jessica took advantage of a regional grant, which awarded her with ten PBS KIDS tablets for use in the classroom. The tablets, Jessica says, have been a windfall for her students' self-sufficiency. They

look up answers to questions and explore places they otherwise wouldn't experience.

When her kids were struggling with positional concepts, they used the tablets to construct a virtual maze, seeing how terms such as "left" and "right" apply in real-life scenarios. They also use the PBS apps to explore the ocean or take a virtual trip to the post office.

"The tablets have been a big hit for us," Jessica says. "They encourage us to tackle new investigations every week."

MAKE IT A FAMILY AFFAIR

One big driver of her pupils' growth, Jessica says, is the children's parents — and how they help continue their children's learning at home.

"We are not the child's first teacher — the parents are," Jessica says. "They spend the most time with their kids, so they know them best. So if we can get those parents and teach them the skills that they need for children to be kindergarten-ready, then they've truly given them a head start."

To help do this, Floyd County educators have worked with KET education consultants to host a series of family learning workshops, where children and parents come together to discover ways to transform their daily interactions into potential learning opportunities.

"Parents are busy keeping their children happy and fed, so they aren't necessarily thinking about early childhood education," Jessica says. "But if we can help them see the importance of turning everyday things — like their conversations in the car — into teaching moments, that reaps dividends for years to come in their children's lives."

TODAY'S KET

Serving the needs of Kentucky's children is a pillar of KET's mission.

Daniel Tiger, Sesame Street, Peg + Cat — these are all beloved and trusted PBS KIDS



programs that not only entertain our youngest ones but also educate and enlighten them. Our 24/7 KET PBS KIDS channel provides a safe and nurturing place for children to watch television.

In fact, PBS KIDS is ranked the #1 educational media brand for children, and 86% of parents agree that PBS KIDS is the most trusted and safe source for children to watch television and play digital games and apps.

Serving the needs of Kentucky's educators is another pillar of KET's mission.

Our dedicated staff of teachers, content producers, and on-the-ground education consultants are committed to ensuring educators like Jessica Kiser have the high-quality tools and resources they need to bring learning to life every day.

While technology has changed and classrooms are embracing it as an integral part of their instruction, it's the content a teacher chooses that ultimately makes that technology effective.

From being a leading content producer for PBS LearningMedia to providing in-school instruction across the state, KET remains dedicated to making sure that Kentuckians have equal access to proven and dynamic learning resources — in our homes and in our classrooms.

Sincerely,

Shae

Shae Hopkins

KET Executive Director and CEO